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061034Z Feb 04

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 HANOI 000333

SIPDIS

FOR CA/OCS/ACS/EAP; EAP/EX; EAP/BCLTV  
BANGKOK FOR RMO, CDC, AID (TDOLAN)  
STATE PASS HHS for Marie Haring Sweeney  
USDA FOR FAS/PASS TO APHIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: AMED AMGT CASC EAGR TBIO VM AFLU

SUBJECT: VIETNAM - AVIAN FLU (AI) UPDATE #9

REFS: A) Hanoi 302 B) Hanoi 321

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CURRENT STATUS  
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¶1. (U) LOCAL MEDIA REPORTS INDICATE 15 CASES OF LABORATORY-CONFIRMED H5 INFLUENZA IN HUMANS. WE HAVE NOT YET BEEN ABLE TO CONFIRM THIS FIGURE WITH THE WHO INVESTIGATIVE TEAM.

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GVN BRIEFING FOR AMBASSADORS  
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¶2. (U) A GVN briefing for Ambassadors on 5 February laid out GVN efforts to address avian flu. They described the creation of the National Steering Committee, and delegation of oversight for control in provinces to cabinet members as reported ref B. The Prime Minister has declared that Vietnam will have avian influenza (AI) under control "by the end of February." Provinces have been instructed to take all necessary measures, and all Ministries have been instructed to make AI their most urgent and central task. The GVN reported that 10.7 million birds have been infected, and 14.2 million birds have been destroyed. When infected birds are discovered, the GVN orders the culling of all birds in a three-kilometer radius. This is to take place within two days in a rural setting or within seven days in an urban setting. All cullers must wear Personal Protective Equipment. Ministerial forces will halt the transportation of poultry - this includes the Ministry of Public Security (which includes the police), the Ministry of Health, and "market forces".

¶3. (U) The GVN further thanked all present for the support and assistance received already, highlighting WHO, FAO, OIE, CDC, JICA, Asian Development Bank, and World Bank. They noted that they look forward to further assistance now (highlighting as needs: diagnostic equipment for the Department of Animal Health, experts to train Vietnamese veterinarians, PPE, and medication for human cases) and in the future (to help restore the poultry industry.) The GVN particularly noted that they will seek international cooperation to improve the agricultural sector and change current practices to more sustainable practices.

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WHO BRIEFING FOR HCMC DIPLOMATIC CORPS  
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¶4. (U) WHO provided a briefing to the diplomatic corps in HCMC similar to the meeting in Hanoi, reported ref A. New information of note included comments on vaccinating poultry. WHO indicated that while the vaccine for birds might prevent birds from getting sick, it would not prevent them from carrying or transmitting the disease. WHO also noted that the GVN sees the outbreak as an agricultural disaster and tourist problem, not as a public health threat.

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IMPACT ON US COMPANIES  
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¶5. (U) KENTUCKY FRIED CHICKEN RESTAURANTS ARE SUFFERING UNDER THE BAN ON THE SALE OF CHICKEN AND CHICKEN PRODUCTS. THEY HAVE BEEN EXPLORING THE POSSIBILITY OF IMPORTING FROZEN, PREPARED CHICKEN FROM THE US. UNFORTUNATELY, WE HAVE BEEN GIVEN CONFLICTING RESPONSES. INITIALLY, OUR AGRICULTURAL ATTACHE (FAS) WAS TOLD THAT NO IMPORTS OF CHICKEN PRODUCTS WOULD BE ALLOWED BECAUSE OF A VERY MINOR, VERY LOW-PATHOGENIC (CONTAGION) STRAIN OF AI THAT IS PRESENT IN THE US. WHEN FAS TRIED TO PUSH THE ISSUE, HE WAS TOLD THAT NO CHICKEN OR CHICKEN PRODUCT IMPORTS WOULD BE ALLOWED AT ALL - FROM ANY COUNTRY. IN THE GVN BRIEFING FOR AMBASSADORS, AMBASSADOR BURGHARDT ASKED WHETHER IMPORTS WERE ALLOWED, AND WAS TOLD THAT IMPORTS FROM AFFECTED COUNTRIES ONLY ARE BANNED. CHICKEN AND CHICKEN PRODUCTS CAN CONTINUE TO BE IMPORTED TO VIETNAM FROM NON-AFFECTED COUNTRIES. FAS

WILL CONTINUE TO FOLLOW THE ISSUE.

¶6. (U) HCMC ECON OFFICER SPOKE WITH CARGILL'S COUNTRY REPRESENTATIVE, CHANH TRUONG. TRUONG STATED THAT HE EXPECTS THE COMPANY TO LOSE SEVEN HUNDRED THOUSAND TO ONE MILLION DOLLARS IN VIETNAM DUE TO AI. ANTICIPATED LOSSES WILL BE DUE TO THE EXPECTED CULLING IN THE DONG NAI HATCHERY, AND RESTOCKING OF EGGS, BIRDS, UNUSED MATERIALS, AND VACCINES. THE CARGILL HATCHERY IN DONG NAI HAS NOT BEEN CULLED, AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES HAVE YET TO ASK THEM TO DO SO. TRUONG REPORTED THAT, IN ADDITION TO THE BAN ON SALES OF CHICKEN AND CHICKEN PRODUCTS, THE GVN IS NOT ALLOWING THEM TO SELL BIRD FEED. THIS COULD RESULT IN REDUCED PRODUCTION BY THREE TO FOUR THOUSAND TONS PER MONTH, AT APPROXIMATELY \$50 PER TON. HE DID NOTE, HOWEVER, THAT THEIR SALES OF FISH FEEDS HAVE INCREASED IN THE CURRENT ENVIRONMENT. CARGILL HAS CONSIDERED VACCINATING THEIR POULTRY, BUT THE GVN IS NOT ALLOWING THEM TO DO SO, AS PER PREVIOUS WHO ADVICE.

¶7. (U) FAS NOTES THAT THE MAJORITY OF CARGILL SALES IN VIETNAM ARE IN PIG AND FISH FEED AND BELIEVES THAT THE GVN BAN ON SALE OF CHICKEN FEED IS AN ATTEMPT TO LIMIT MOVEMENT OF TRUCKS FROM FARM TO FARM AND DISCOURAGE THE RAISING OF CHICKENS. THE UNINTENDED EFFECTS MAY BE THAT FARMERS PRODUCE LOW-QUALITY HOMEMADE FEED OR SLAUGHTER HEALTHY CHICKENS.  
BURGHARDT